

## In Memoriam

### George Winokur, M.D., 1925–1996

**Raymond R. Crowe, M.D.**

*University of Iowa, College of Medicine*

George Winokur died on October 12, 1996 in Iowa City, Iowa of pancreatic cancer after an illness of six months duration.

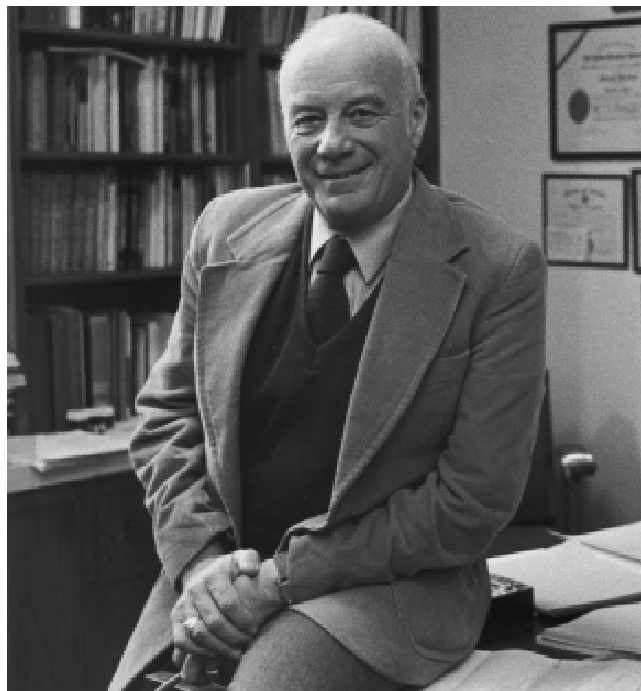
George graduated from Johns Hopkins University and received his M.D. degree from the University of Maryland School of Medicine in 1947. He began his residency in psychiatry at the Seton Institute and completed it at Washington University, joining the faculty there in 1951. He remained at Washington University until he moved to the University of Iowa in 1971 to become Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry, a position he held until 1990, when he decided to step down to devote himself fulltime to research and teaching.

George entered psychiatry at a time when the field had lost its way. He realized that its future lay in a return to a medical model, and he found that model at Washington University. Along with Eli Robins, Samuel Guze, and other colleagues he set out to change the direction of American psychiatry. Psychiatry should be founded on empiricism, operationalism and minimalism. Classification should be based on objective data, diagnosis on reliable criteria, and the nomenclature should contain no more disorders than the data support. Their paper setting forth these principles laid the foundation for modern psychiatric diagnosis [Feighner et al., 1972]. In the end they prevailed. Psychiatry has embraced the first two precepts, though George would probably feel that it has yet to come to terms with the third.

He came to Iowa in 1971 and built a department that became widely recognized for its leadership in diagnosis and classification, as well as its contributions to psychiatric epidemiology and genetics. He believed that an academic department should be a true center of learning [Winokur, 1970]. It happened so easily; a born researcher, his enthusiasm for investigation was a magnetic force that captivated his faculty and led naturally to a productive department. Many of the young faculty whose early development was nurtured by this environment have gone on to distinguished careers. Some years ago a residency applicant asked him if Iowa was a "publish-or-perish" department. George's answer was characteristically direct: "yes," he replied. "That's strange," the applicant reflected, "everyone seems so happy." "That's because they're publishing," George replied.

George was a geneticist, but an applied one. A clinician to the marrow, for him genetics existed to classify more accurately, diagnose more correctly, treat more effectively. He never lost sight of that. Genetics was a tool: psychiatry had no postmortem, so genetics was his scalpel to dissect the syndromes and search for the diseases that caused them. Thus, he was one of the first to separate affective disorder into unipolar and bipolar subtypes based on family history. He proposed a sex-linked dominant model for bipolar illness to account for the segregation ratios he observed in families and pioneered some of the first linkage research in psychiatry to test the sex-linkage hypothesis [Winokur et al., 1969]. This work set the stage for modern molecular genetic research on bipolar disorder.

He was a student of affective disorders. George was a founding editor of the *Journal of Affective Disorders*, and with his co-editor, Eugene Paykel, made it a respected and widely read journal. He initiated the "Iowa 500," and with his collaborator, Ming Tsuang, made that name a part of the psychiatric lexicon. He developed a classification for unipolar depression based on whether the family history was positive for depression, alcoholism, or neither [Winokur, 1972].



Received 4 January 1997; Revised 4 February 1997

Above all George was provocative. He distrusted authority, was contemptuous of it; the data were his compass. He was once interviewed by a newspaper reporter while giving a talk in another city and, ever critical of psychoanalysis, suggested that there was no medical evidence that it worked. For his irreverence the newspaper presented him with their Golden Cowpile award. Of all his awards—and there were many: The Hoffheimer Prize from the American Psychiatric Association, the Gold Medal Award from the Society for Biological Psychiatry, the Anna Monica Foundation Award, the Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Society of Psychiatric Genetics—the Golden Cowpile captures best his ability to provoke people into questioning the status quo that was quintessentially George.

George retired a year before his death but continued to work daily. He enjoyed the academic environment, the marketplace of ideas, too much to quit it. He died after missing one day. It is the way he would have chosen to leave.

## REFERENCES

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